

Mr J. P. Edwards
With the Author's compliments

THE CROSS,

BEING A

COURSE OF SERMONS

PREACHED IN

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH,

HALIFAX,

On the Sunday evenings in Lent, 1879.

BY THE REV. W. J. ANCIENT.

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

HALIFAX, N. S.

PRINTED BY WM. MACNAB, 12 PRINCE ST.

1879.

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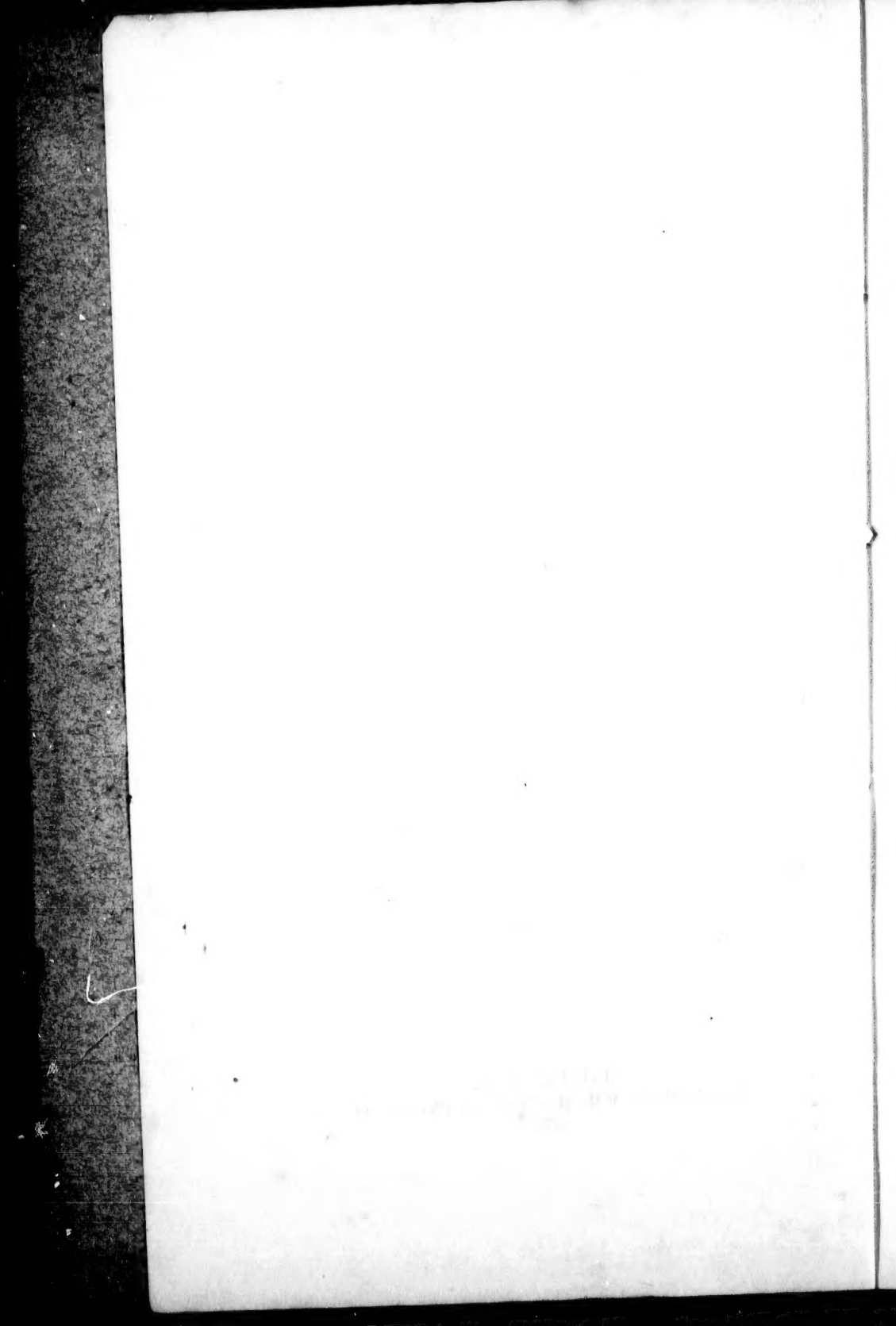
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PREFACE.

THESE Sermons lay no claim to originality of thought ; or elegance of diction. They are plain, practical discourses delivered by a plain, practical man to a plain, practical congregation, and would probably never have been heard of outside of the Church in which they were preached if it had not been for the fact that one member left and began to attend the services of a church in another parish ; giving as his reason the unsoundness of the doctrines of these sermons. In other words, that he was driven from his Church by the "High Churchism" of the Minister. And as this is not the first attempt to cause trouble within the Church, and raise suspicion outside, calculated to injure the author of these sermons, he has taken this mode of proving the groundlessness of the charge ; hoping that by showing how little those making it are capable of judging between truth and error to render it unnecessary to take any further notice of them : and to prevent himself being enveloped in a cloud of suspicion which he already feels to be gathering around him.

They are also published with the view of enabling those—not few in number—who have expressed their regret at not being able to hear the whole course, to secure a copy and read it in their homes.

The texts and themes upon which these sermons are written appeared, among several others, in the *Clergyman's Magazine* for February, 1877, as suitable topics for Passion Week.

Should there be any profit arising from the sale of these sermons, it will be given to the fund of the Sunday School.

The Power of the Cross.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."—*John* xii. 32.

"THIS He said," says the Evangelist, "signifying what death He should die." And that those who heard Him understood Him to refer to His death is evident from their reply as recorded in the 34th verse of this Chapter; although we can scarcely suppose that they understood the full import of His words. Had they understood it, they would doubtless have asked for a fuller explanation: for nothing seemed more unlikely to human reason, than that such a death as crucifixion should attract men unto Him. For, in the first place was it not indicative of weakness? And how could He of whom the prophets had spoken as "a Leader and Commander to the people"; a Prince and a Ruler; nay, even a King, allow Himself to be betrayed into the hands of the Romans and by them put to an ignominious death?

In the next place was it not, at least, presumptive evidence of His being an evil doer? However arbitrary the power of the Romans over the Jews, they could not put a man to death publicly without some charge being laid against him. And there must be *some* show of reason for taking His life. But in this case the charge was brought by the Jews themselves: and when asked what He had done, they declared—hypocritically of course *we* know—that if He were not a malefactor they would not have "delivered Him up." And how could He who was to be the "Just" and the "Holy One," allow Himself to bear the reproach of a malefactor?

Thus to the eye of sense, His being lifted up from the earth by crucifixion, so far from attracting men, would appear to be the most sure and certain way that could well be devised of repelling them. And had His disciples fully understood His meaning they would—not only on account of their love for Him; but from the very nature of the case, as they would view it—have been ready to exclaim, in the language of Peter, on a previous occasion: "Be it far from Thee O Lord: this shall not be unto Thee:" whilst His enemies would have repeated their former taunt: "He hath a devil, and is mad."

But however unreasonable such a procedure might appear to mere human reason, and however unlikely to meet with success, the event has justified the prediction; proving "the foolishness of God" to be wiser than men: and "the weakness of God" to be stronger than men.

At the feast of the Passover Jesus was lifted up on the cross amid the scoffs and jeers of the Jews who cried, "away with Him; away with Him. He saved *others*; *Himself* He cannot save." "Come down from the cross if Thou be the Son of God," and other such insults. And about seven weeks later, at the feast of Pentecost, no less than three thousand souls, among whom were many of these same Jews, accepted Him as the Messiah. Owned Him as their Lord and their God, and such was the attractive power of the crucified Nazarene, that, notwithstanding all the opposing power of the rulers of the Jews, we read that "the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith." And not only in Jerusalem; but also in Samaria, and the surrounding districts was the power of the cross felt. Nay, more; such was its attraction that many of the subtle minded Greeks found in it a greater fascination than in any of their philosophies. And the haughty Romans by whose power Jesus was crucified, began to bow the knee before Him; and three centuries afterwards were actually marching to meet their enemies with the instrument of His torture erected in the air as the emblem of their faith and pledge of their victory. And still further: the influence of the cross was not confined to those nations which had attained to a certain degree of civilization: but such was its power that the more barbarous peoples, including Great Britain, were gradually brought within the circle of those who, like St. Paul, were prepared to count all things loss that they might win Christ and be found in Him.

Nor was the power of the cross to draw men from their national idolatries and life-long superstitions: from their lusts and passions to a life of purity and practical holiness, confined to those early times; and to what is called the old world. But it is still wielding a mighty influence for good wherever the gospel is preached. And to day, hundreds—nay *thousands*, are being brought into the fold of Christ, not by the power of the sword, not by the philosophy of the sage; but by the foolishness of preaching.

To-day is the simple story of the cross proving itself adapted to meet the cravings, and supply the soul-wants of men of

"every nation under heaven." Levelling down the caste of India ; opening up the long closed interior of China ; dethroning the idols of Japan ; putting an end—if it has not already done so—to the cannibalism of the South-sea Islands ; closing up the slave trade of Africa : as well as further humanizing ; or in other words more completely christianizing, the more early christian nations. So that we shall soon be able to take up the language of the Jewish rulers and say with truth ; and not like them, in the spirit of disappointment ; but in the spirit of triumph, " behold the world is gone after Him." Yes : thank God we can sing in the words of the poet Cowper :—

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power.
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

And now my brethren let us pause, and endeavour to ascertain wherein lies this power of the cross. What is the secret of its attraction ? How is it that such strength is brought out of such apparent weakness ?

I. Its power is the power of love. Much has been said at different times, and by different persons, about the attractive power of love. And it is probably impossible to over-estimate its drawing, softening influence. We have all read, or heard of—perhaps some of us have seen, cases of mental obstinacy, and moral hardness and depravity which defied all the efforts of magistrates and prison-keepers, all the restraints and discipline of jails and reformatories which laughed at lectures about duty to God, to the State and to Society ; but which as soon as they came in contact with real kindness—which is nothing but love in action—were immediately attracted, softened, won, and eventually, entirely transformed.

Nor is the power of love less effective upon the minds and hearts of people of higher morals and more refined life. Under the influence of love, embodied in sympathetic words and kind deeds, the strongest prejudices have been overcome, indifference converted into attention, neglect into kindness and dislike into attachment. And such is the confidence placed in its winning, conquering power, that when we find anyone uninfluenced by it, we almost invariably look upon his case as hopeless.

But what is the love of man in comparison with the love of God ? Our love is but a reflection of His ; and at best but a very dim one. And where does the love of God shine with such splendour as from the cross ?

It is true that His love is discernible everywhere—*In creation*: By the way in which everything is made to minister to the best interests of His creatures, particularly the highest of those creatures—man. And doubtless when at the beginning “the morning stars sang together; and all the sons of God shouted for joy,” it was as much, if not more, on account of the love as of the wisdom and the power displayed in the work.

In Providence: Not only in that general providence by which He shows His watchful care over us: in the language of St. Paul:—“Giving us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness:” but more particularly in that special providence by which our individual lives have been guarded: and all notwithstanding our selfishness and ingratitude.

But if we would sound the full depths of God’s love we must turn to Christ. Christ whose coming down into this lower world was the *result* of God’s love, for “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish; but have everlasting life.” Christ who is “the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His person,”—the one in whom dwelt “all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Christ whose every act of kindness and word of tenderness was but a manifestation of God’s love to man.

But glorious as was the life of Christ, much as His love shines through His every word and deed, the glory of the whole pales before the one great act of self surrender. And it is only by fixing our eyes upon the cross that we can get anything like an adequate conception of that love wherewith He loves us. Here it is that we see:—“Love *divine* all love excelling.”

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,” said our blessed Lord, and yet He Himself laid down His life for His enemies. And it is this love when seen, and understood, which gives the cross its attractive power. And, as St. John says, “we love Him **BECAUSE** He first loved us.”

That this thought was prominent in the minds of the first disciples, I think is evident, not only from the writings of St. John, the loving disciple, but also from those of St. Paul, who in writing to the Church in Galatia when in the midst of his argument upon justification by faith, says: “The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, *who loved me, and gave Himself for me.*” And again; in the Epistle

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to the Ephesians, when exhorting them to a life of purity and mutual love, He urges it in these words: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as *Christ also hath loved us; and hath given Himself for us*, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor."

And as in the early days of the Church so now; just in proportion as we can realize the exceeding love of Christ in giving Himself for us, shall we love Him in return. And the more we love Him, the nearer shall we be drawn to him in faith, in prayer and in practical holiness.

But besides this power of love, which may be termed the *intrinsic* power of the cross; there is what may be called an *external* power, and which I now proceed to notice,

II.—As the power of the Spirit.

It appears that Calvin, as well as many others who have followed him, explained our text as meaning that if the doctrine of Christ crucified, is preached in the pulpit, i. e., if Christ be lifted up by the ministers it will have a drawing effect upon the hearers. Canon Ryle is rather severe upon this interpretation, and thinks it an unfair accommodation of words, as the lifting up can only refer to the crucifixion.

No doubt this is correct. But at the same time, before people can be drawn to Christ they must be made acquainted with Him. Before they can be attracted by the cross, they must hear the story of the cross. "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" And it is by the power of the Holy Ghost accompanying the preaching of the word that people are convinced of sin and led to the Saviour. And no doubt that just in proportion as Christ's ambassadors faithfully preach Christ and Him crucified, will the Holy Spirit apply the word and bless their work. That this power is necessary to the successful preaching of the word is shown, I think, by the fact that our blessed Lord bade His disciples tarry in Jerusalem until they were endowed with power from on high. And it is to this that St. Paul attributes his success in preaching to the Corinthians; when he says: "My preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom: but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

I am aware that some people refer this to the miraculous gifts possessed by the Apostles. But Alford thinks that St. Paul, in the passage just quoted, is speaking subjectively, and of the preaching itself as a demonstration of the truth "springing from the Spirit and power of God." And we must bear in mind the fact that previous to the descent of the Holy Ghost

the disciples lacked two essential elements of power in preaching, viz., knowledge and utterance. "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth," said Christ, "He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you."

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come," they, not only understood the things of Christ; but "they spake as the Spirit gave them utterance." And then Christ not only promised to be with the Apostles; but with His Church until the end of the world. And hence we believe that this power still accompanies the faithful preaching of the word: and that these two forces—the one, as I have termed it intrinsic; the other extrinsic: but given by Christ by virtue of His sacrificial death, resurrection and ascension—are still operating to draw men to Christ.

And this leads me to observe:

III.—That it is to *Himself* that Christ draws men.

However true it be that Christ came to establish a Church, and not a mere system of ethics. And however necessary for us to have a complete and perfect system of theology: neither the Church nor theology takes the first place in the New Testament Scriptures. There it is Christ. Christ who died. Christ who rose again from the dead. Christ who ascended into heaven. Christ who, with the Father, sends the Holy Spirit upon His people. Christ who intercedes for us. Christ who is to come again and take His people to Himself. There Christ is the sun and centre of the system: the source of all light and life: who is Himself *the* life and *the* truth. And just as the sun—the centre of the solar system—by diffusing its rays, sheds light and heat upon all around it, causing the life-germ of the seed to develop, the plant to grow and the tree to produce its fruit, and by its genial warmth draws all vegetable life up towards itself: so is it with Christ. By the circulation of the Scriptures: by the preaching of the word and by the Holy Spirit sent by Christ to receive of His and shew it unto us, our understandings are enlightened and the love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts; we are drawn up towards Him, and by a right use of all the *means* of grace, we grow in grace and we bring forth fruit unto righteousness. But just as when the earth in its revolutions upon its axis, turns away from the sun, all vegetation is checked in its growth; and if the surface of the earth be deprived of the sun's rays for a length of time, as in the arctic regions, for instance, all vegetable life becomes extinct: so is it with the soul. It is only when enlightened and warmed by the rays of the sun of

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righteousness that spiritual life in the soul can exist and thrive. I fear, my brethren, that we are too apt to forget this great and all important truth. We are too ready to rest satisfied with a mere orthodox creed, and respectable church membership. If we attend to the services of the Church, partake of the Holy Communion, and conform to the moral code which the teaching and discipline of the Church require, we are prone to comfort ourselves with the idea that nothing more is required of us; forgetting that these are not the end; but only the means to the end.

I yield to no one in reverence for the glorious old historic Church to which we belong; with its apostolic order and its apostolic doctrine. The Church which has given to us—and to the world an open bible. The Church which is to-day sending the living voice into almost every part of the globe. The Church which by God's blessing is taking root downward and bearing fruit upward to such an extent that it bids fair soon to give all nations shelter beneath its branches. This Church with its open bible, its calm sober devotional liturgy, its sacraments, its constantly recurring seasons of the christian year, its provision for the training of the lambs of Christ's flock. This Church, not of my birth and childhood, but of my selection in more mature years, I love with all the ardour of which my soul is capable. And you, my brethren, are my witnesses that, according to the ability which God has given me, I have sought to imbue you all with the same loving regard for it. But God forbid that ever I should attempt to put, or you to accept, the Church in the place of Christ. No: He is the chief corner stone of the Church without which it could not stand. He is the head of the body without which the members could have no life. He is the reservoir in which is stored, and from which flows every grace and blessing that we need. It is therefore as much for our good as for His glory that we should be drawn unto Him. While therefore we value highly the Church as the body of Christ: and our own branch of it as one of the most pure and vigorous members of the Church catholic; while we reverence the office of the ministry, and honor the men in it for their work's sake: let us rest satisfied with nothing short of an individual contact with a personal, living Saviour. The one whose words rang through the Temple on that great day of the feast: and the sound of which is still reverberating through the earth: "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." Yes brethren come and you shall have all you need: for in Him there is "enough for each, enough for all and enough for evermore."

And if your hearts feel cold, if your love for Christ is waning, your attachment to Him feeble, let me urge you to draw near to the cross. O brethren if you would have the smouldering embers of your love fanned into a flame gather around the cross. Behold there the Son of God suffering, bleeding, dying, and in the midst of His agony not only caring for His mother ; but praying for His enemies, and granting pardon and comfort to the dying thief.

And remember this suffering and death was for you. " He gave His life a ransom for many." " He died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Yes :—

" Thou, O my Jesus, Thou didst me
Upon the cross embrace,
For me didst bear the nails and spear
And manifold disgrace.

" And griefs and torments numberless,
And sweat of agony :
Yea death itself ; and all for me
Who was Thine enemy.

" Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ
Should I not love Thee well ?
Not for the hope of winning heaven,
Nor of escaping hell.

" Not with the hope of gaining ought,
Not seeking a reward ;
But as Thyself hast loved me,
O ever loving Lord."

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The Offence of the Cross.

"And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased."—*Gal. v. 11.*

THE Church in Galatia was—as is well known to all students of this epistle—infested with a set of false teachers. Men who, jealous of the influence of St. Paul, sought to undermine his authority by throwing doubt upon the validity of his apostleship. And who at the same time endeavoured—and with a considerable amount of success—to introduce a judaising element into the doctrine of the church. Teaching that circumcision was still necessary. And of course with circumcision the keeping of the Jewish law.

His personal authority, St. Paul defends in the first two chapters of this epistle, while chapters three and four contain his defence of the doctrine of free grace, as opposed to salvation by the works of the law. With this chapter—or according to Alford—with the thirteenth verse of it, begins the more hortatory portion of the epistle. And before proceeding with it the Apostle seems to pause for the purpose of meeting an argument used by his opponents to the effect that he himself had preached circumcision, and was in reality in favor of it. And no doubt they would try to make capital out of the fact that he had circumcised Timothy. But without going into an elaborate argument upon the subject and giving his reasons for so doing: Paul simply turns upon them and asks them why—this being the case—they continue to oppose him. If we are agreed upon this point, and all preach the same doctrine, why do ye not, instead of opposing me, give me the right hand of fellowship? "If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased." His object being to show that the very fact of their continuing to persecute him was proof that he did *not* preach circumcision.

And this brings us to the subject of this sermon: *the offence of the cross.*

"We preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling block"; says St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians. Where the word translated stumbling block is the same as here translated offence, and is the word from which comes our word *scandal*.

Salvation through a crucified Redeemer was so opposed to the popular theology and general line of thought of the Jew of that period, that while—as we observed in our previous sermon—many gladly accepted Him as the long promised, and ardently desired Messiah, the great majority of the people were scandalized by it. It became to them a stumbling-block and a rock of offence. It ran counter to all their preconceived ideas, disappointed all their ambitious hopes of greatness and glory. In a word, the cross was altogether too humbling for them.

I. It was fatal to all their hopes of national greatness.

That the Jews were anxiously looking for the advent of the Messiah at the time when He actually appeared, we know from the readiness with which they lent themselves to the designs of the various impostors who came forward about that time. But the Messiah which they had pictured to their minds was very different to the one foretold by the prophets and which, in fulfilment of their predictions came at the time appointed. He was, it is true, according to their idea, to be a Saviour. But it was to save them from the power of their civil rulers, rather than from the power of the devil, and their own corrupt hearts. He was to be a king. But it was to take immediate possession of the throne of David in Jerusalem, and reign over a temporal Israel, rather than to become enthroned in their hearts and govern a spiritual kingdom. He was to establish peace. But it was to be peace of a national and international kind, rather than a peace with God of which they did not feel the need. And consequently when they saw Jesus of Nazareth ascend the cross instead of the throne; being put to death by the Roman power instead of conquering it: instead of reigning in triumph, being put to an ignominious death—the death of a slave: and when instead of the Roman eagles being driven out of the land, and the kingdom of Israel assuming more than its Solomonic glory; they still heard the measured tread of the hated sentinel upon the pavement of the Sanctuary enclosure: and were over-looked, even at their devotions by the watchful eye of the centurion—in short, as their country still remained but an insignificant province of the mighty Roman Empire, they were offended.

II. It was in direct antagonism to all their religious prejudices.

Had they not a divinely appointed priesthood, and a divinely constituted service? Were not they exclusively God's chosen people? And yet if the doctrine of the cross, as preached by the apostles, prevailed, all this would slip away from them.

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For these new preachers declared that this death was not only sacrificial in its nature ; but that it superseded all the other sacrifices which in fact were merely types of this one.

That this Jesus of Nazareth was Himself the Great High Priest to which the Jewish ; or Aaronic priesthood must give place. And not only so : but that by the cross was broken down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile : and that henceforth all distinctions of nation, race and family should cease. That henceforth there should be neither Jew nor Gentile : bond nor free : male nor female : but that they all should be one in Christ Jesus. And this was more than the Jew could willingly accept. Of course he expected all nations of the earth to be blessed through Abraham's seed : but it was to be by submitting to the Jewish law, and receiving the sign and seal of Abraham's faith—circumcision. But according to this doctrine the rite itself was to be abolished ; and the Jew, without any distinguishing mark whatever, to be placed on the same level as the hitherto despised Gentile.

Such, in brief, was the distinctively Jewish phase of the offence of the cross, at the time when the gospel was first preached.

But although changed, as to its outward form, and mode of expression, the offence of the cross, in all that constitutes its essence still exists, and though the opponents of the cross are perhaps less demonstrative than formerly they are still as unwilling to accept its humbling doctrines as ever they were.

How many there are who tell you, almost in so many words, that to carry out the principles of christianity would be to put insuperable difficulties in their way to worldly advancement. Talk to the ambitious, aspiring worldling about the humility, self-denial and consideration for others taught by the cross ; and he will treat it with disdain. Tell the selfish, grasping money hunter of the riches laid aside and the poverty assumed by Christ in order that we might be made rich. And ask him to seek first the Kingdom of God—the true riches which the cross purchased for him. And you will get as your answer, a contemptuous shrug of the shoulder if nothing worse.

These men, like the Jews of old, want *present, material* advantages ; and because the cross offers them spiritual ones they are offended.

Then again, *one* of the offensive features of the cross is its levelling principles. It makes no distinction between the respectable worldling who moves in "good society" and the less favoured sinner who has to make himself content with the more

humble associations of life. Between the one whose educational advantages and social standing enable him to indulge in its more refined forms ; and him who, through lack of this, yields himself to its more gross and revolting features.

That the lady in the drawing-room and the cook in the kitchen ; the gentleman who drives his tandem, and the stable boy who cleans his harness ; the millionaire in his office, and the beggar in the street, should be put on an equal footing is indeed an offence to many. And particularly it is so when even the morally living man is told that he is as much in need of the cross as the one whose sin is notorious. That "the scripture hath concluded all under sin" is a doctrine which is as obnoxious to them as it was to the Jew.

And this leads me to observe.

III. The cross strikes at the root of that which is dear to the heart, not only of the Jew, but of all mankind—the principle of self-righteousness.

The language of the law was : do this and thou shalt live. And although no man could ever lay claim to having met all its requirements, yet as provision was made for failure in this respect, by the sin, trespass and other offerings, the Jew could acknowledge his shortcomings without—to any great extent—affecting his self-righteousness. In fact that principle was fed and nurtured, so to speak, by those very offerings. The animal to be offered must be furnished by him. The ceremony was to be participated in by him. And therefore while it was a confession of sin and the need of forgiveness, yet there was so much of *doing* in it, so much of personal service, and personal sacrifice, all of which afforded a certain amount of gratification to the carnal mind that I repeat it fostered this principle of which we are speaking.

Of course we know it was not the object of the law and its sacrifices to do this ; but the reverse. Doubtless those sacrifices were intended, among other things, to show man his fallen condition and the need of expiation ; and that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. They were, no doubt, also intended to point him forward to the One who by the sacrifice of Himself should put away sin. But to the average mind of the carnal Jew they meant nothing more than that the imperfections of his life were atoned for, and that practically he stood sinless before God.

This delusion the cross dispelled. By it the powerlessness of the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin was made manifest. And further, that although these sacrifices had had

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their divinely appointed offices to fill their purposes were now served, and therefore they were to cease. That for the future all who would be saved must simply accept the one sacrifice offered for them; and that, not as a supplement to their own efforts, a remedy for their individual defects, but as the sole ground of their forgiveness and acceptance. In short the Jew was now to be told, as he is in this epistle, that the law under which he had been living, and by the provisions of which he had prided himself of being so perfect before God, was never intended to be more than a guardian—tutor to prepare him for Christ.

We are now in a position to form some idea—though perhaps a very imperfect one—of the shock which this doctrine would give the mind of pharisaical Jews. And understanding this we may cease to wonder at the determined opposition shown by so many of them to the cross.

But do not imagine, my brethren, that this principle of self-righteousness was confined to those Jews; or to the days of the early church: and that it has no interest for us beyond that of an antiquarian curiosity. Do not suppose that the offence of the cross—in this respect—has ceased. No, this principle is deeply rooted in human nature; and nothing but the grace of God can eradicate it. Nothing is more distasteful to the natural man than the doctrine of the cross as unfolded in the epistles of St. Paul. That salvation is a free gift; and must be accepted as such, or not accepted at all: that it is "not of works lest any man should boast," is a doctrine which goes to the very bottom of the pharisaical complacency of the human heart, and disturbs the foundation upon which it rests. And hence its distastefulness. Let a man believe that there is something meritorious in his prayers, bible-readings, church-going, alms-giving, and his various other christian works; that they will be accepted by God as a "set off" against his numerous sins of omission and commission; and he will, as a rule, be quite willing to allow Christ to step in—if we may so speak—and make up any little deficiency which may remain. But tell him that he must come as a vile, helpless, unworthy sinner, and sue for mercy, laying aside all idea of merit in his own doings, and simply accepting what has been done for him; and at once the offence of the cross appears.

It is no doubt largely owing to this that christianity so soon became corrupted, and that corrupt forms of it have so extensively prevailed. That we now see so many who will endure long, painful fastings, perform laborious rounds of so called

religious duties, and in a variety of ways afflict themselves, who at the same time show by the way in which they profane God's holy name and day : by their open neglect—I had almost said defiance—of His laws, that their hearts are unchanged, their wills unsubdued, and that the love of God is not in them.

But this principle shows itself in various other ways ; sometimes assuming the guise of the deepest humility : as for instance when we find people professing to be afraid to believe that God will pardon them until they have repented more, wept more, prayed more, felt more and so on. As if their lamentations and tears possessed a commercial value which could be given to God as an atonement for their sins. In fact it seems to suit the bent of the natural will to reverse God's order of things : and instead of accepting salvation through Christ and then by the influence and aid of the Holy Spirit, *working out* their salvation in the subduing of the flesh, the purifying of the body, soul and spirit : to keep aloof from Christ until by their prayers, repentance and good works they imagine themselves *worthy* of His acceptance. And this principle is far more wide-spread and dominant in its operations than perhaps many of us imagine.

But whilst what has been said is true of many : thank God there are also many who, taught by the spirit, have learned the sad truth concerning the condition of their hearts in the sight of God. Have been enabled to give up all idea of salvation by their own merits. Have been led to renounce self : And in the language of David to cry "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." "Have mercy upon me, O God." "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

And not only have they been led to see and mourn their sinfulness and sue for mercy : but also to look away from themselves to the cross ; and in the person of Him crucified thereon to recognize the one who was delivered for their offences ; who died for them "the just for the unjust that He might bring them to God." The one who as the good shepherd declared that He laid down His life for the sheep. The one who said : "come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." And thus believing in Him as one mighty and willing to save they have come to Him with the language of the poet, if not on their lips, at least in their hearts :—

"Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God I come.

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot;
To Thee whose blood can cleanse such spot,
O Lamb of God I come.

"Just as I am, Thou wilt receive;
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God I come."

And now, my brethren, let me ask what is your individual position with regard to the cross? Is Christ crucified a stumbling-block to you? Are you so well satisfied with your own goodness; the purity of your heart, the unselfishness of your principles; the honesty of your purposes and the blamelessness of your life as to feel no need of the atoning blood of the Saviour? Can you look forward to the time when you will be called upon to answer for the deeds done in the body with such confidence as to feel no need of one to step in between you and God's justice? If so let me entreat of you to enter your closet and in the presence of Him whose eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good, who trieth the hearts, lay bare all the hidden and secret springs of action. Probe your heart to its very core. Test honestly every motive. Shrink not from bringing to the surface every particle of selfishness, which you find there; whatever there may be of self-esteem, love of pre-eminence, desire for worldly advantage, to say nothing of still lower motives. And cease not until you have laid bare everything. And having done so, and the mind's eye having carefully surveyed and taken stock of the whole, test it by the divine standard. Try it by such passages of God's word as: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy mind." "If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him." "If any man love father or mother more than me, he is not worthy of me." And if you do not leave your closet with your estimate of yourself very much lowered I have little hope for you.

But perhaps you will tell me that God is merciful. That He knows you to be placed in the midst of temptations and difficulties. And consequently you expect some allowance to be made for all these untoward circumstances. That God is mer-

ciful needs no proof. If He were not, neither you nor I would be occupying our present positions. And that God will judge righteously I am fully convinced, not only by the very nature of the case : but from the assurances of His own word.

But that is not the question now before us. The question is : will you allow God who out of His abundant mercy, His unfathomable goodness, has provided a Saviour and wrought out a plan of salvation, save you in His own way ; or will you persist in refusing and trying to save yourself ? If so there can be but one result.

Let me here use a simple illustration : You have fallen overboard and you cannot swim. You are clothed with heavy garments which are fast becoming saturated with water, and you are a long distance from the shore. Another man who is a swimmer and well able to rescue you from your perilous position, jumps overboard after you and offers to save you. But instead of thankfully accepting the offer, your pride—or if you wish, your self-respect—leads you to decline it, as you cannot humble yourself to accept such aid ; but will save yourself or die in the attempt. You know what the result would be. Do you reply that no one would be guilty of such folly ? Perhaps not. But those who refuse to accept salvation through Christ are guilty of greater folly. We are immersed, as it were, in sin. And our nature is such that we cannot rise above the element surrounding us : but on the other hand we are being surely carried down by it. Christ comes and offers us salvation. And if we reject Him our case is hopeless. We must have salvation by the cross ; or no salvation at all.

But, my brethren, I would fain hope better things of you. I would hope that realizing your sinfulness and need of a Saviour, and looking away to the cross and the lamb of God slain thereon ; you have, instead of being offended, most thankfully received that, His inestimable gift—the gift of Himself : and that you are daily striving, by the grace of God to make Him the only return in your power which will be acceptable to Him and beneficial to you, by crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts ; and yielding your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. And thus giving yourselves to Him who gave Himself for you, you will find that that which to others is an offence, or stone of stumbling, is to you the power of God unto salvation.

The Wisdom of the Cross.

—1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

IN our last sermon we observed that Christ crucified was unto the Jews an offence on account of its running counter to their preconceived ideas; of its levelling principles; and the attack which it made upon their principle of salvation by the works of the law. And hence, their determined opposition to it.

But to the Greeks this doctrine was objectionable on other grounds. While the Jew professed to be willing to accept the crucified Nazarene as the Messiah, if God would give him some unmistakable token that such was the Divine Will, the Greek treated the doctrine as being too foolish to deserve his serious attention. Thus, at Athens, when Paul had opened up, to some extent, the truth of the Gospel, and preached, through Christ, the resurrection from the dead, some mocked, and others politely "bowed him out" by telling him they would hear him at some future time. A promise which we have every reason to believe they never intended to fulfil. And we may suppose the Athenians to be a fair specimen of the cultured Greeks generally. Proud of their mental powers and logical training; and having unlimited confidence in their philosophical systems. And, unlike the Jews, not having been trained under a series of revelations from heaven; they put everything to the test of reason. And whatever, after that test, did not recommend itself to their judgment was of course rejected. Now it is easy to imagine how difficult it would be for such people to accept the doctrine of the cross. They were asked to believe in, and accept one, as the Saviour of the world, who according to their view of the matter had been proved incapable of saving Himself. To believe in one as the Son of God who had actually been put to death by man. To believe not only in the actual restoration to life of the body of Christ after lying in the grave: but also that there was to be, as the result of His death and resurrection, a *general* resurrection of the dead. All of which was so contrary to their hopes and expectations, and so impos-

sible to be accounted for by their philosophy that they pronounced it foolishness. So it may be in your estimation, says St. Paul, but we who have become believers in the crucified one have found it to be capable of doing what your boasted wisdom never did. It is saving souls, enabling men to overcome their sinful habits, hold in check their lusts and passions. It is promoting good will between man and man, making men live better lives here, and fitting them for a higher and holier life hereafter. And therefore, foolish as it may be in your eyes, we consider it to be the highest wisdom possible, even the wisdom of God. It is to this latter thought, viz. : the wisdom of God as displayed in the cross, that I desire now to direct your particular attention. And I shall endeavour to explain and illustrate it under various heads as far as the limited time at my disposal will allow.

I. The wisdom of the cross is seen by the fact that it opens up a way of access to God.

I need not occupy your time by proving the need of this, as it is universally felt, and the various systems of religion, wherever found, are but the expression of the sad truth that man is a sinner against his Maker and needs some means of reconciliation. And all revelation as given to us in Holy Scripture, is based upon this fact as well as its being a truth which is deeply graven in the hearts and consciences of us all. From the day when Adam and Eve "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, among the trees of the garden," unto the present time man has felt his unfitness for holding intercourse with his Maker without some daysman to stand between them.

But who shall be found to do this? No *man* can do it for *all men* are sinners. "There is none righteous : no not one." An angel cannot do it for he can in no way be *man's* representative either as making atonement for his sins ; or acting as mediator. Who then shall be found with sufficient wisdom to devise a plan, and establish a means whereby man may receive forgiveness of sins past and have access to God for the future? Can the philosophy of the Sage supply this want? So far from having done so at the time when they were objecting to the cross ; the philosophers had failed to understand the full nature of the service God required at their hands and consequently the extent to which they had fallen short. Much less were they able to provide the remedy. Who then shall be found, we again ask, to rescue man from his lost condition? Brethren the cross is the answer to that question. God's infinite wisdom devised the plan, and He in His infinite love gave His

own Son who took our nature upon Him, and so united the God-head and manhood in one person. And having done so He on the cross became a sacrifice, as the second Article of our Church puts it, "not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men." "He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And having thus put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and made reconciliation for the sins of the people, He committed unto His Church the word of reconciliation. And now all who through the preaching of that word believe on Him are justified from all things; and being justified by faith, we have peace with God." By this means God is just and the justifier of him that believeth. Therefore let the philosopher, ancient or modern, object to the cross as much as he will, we rejoice to know it is, not only the power of God, but also the wisdom of God.

II. The wisdom of the cross is seen in its adaptability to the needs of all men.

It is characteristic of great minds to be of wide range, comprehensive grasp, and broad sympathies. Thus whilst almost anyone can fraternize with those who have the same views and are of the same general temperament as himself, and all but the most callous will sympathize with his own kindred, it is only the man whose greatness of mind and heart places him above these little boundary lines of party, sect and nation that can take within the capacious grasp of his sympathy the whole family of man.

And whilst almost any "village politician" can legislate for his own class and its interests, it requires the comprehensive intellect of the real statesman to understand the wants, and legislate for the interests of the various individuals and industries of a great nation. But where can the man be found, who as a philanthropist, politician, or in any other capacity, shall devise a plan far-reaching enough in its provisions to meet the requirements and promote the interests of the whole race. And at the same time so simple in its application as to be available for everyone; and so effective in operation as to disappoint none who honestly adopt it? Could such a man be found, he would be applauded and extolled as the greatest genius that the world ever saw. He would be regarded as but one step below a God.

But what no man, nor body of men, ever did or ever can do for the temporal needs of man, God—by the cross—has done for his highest, his spiritual needs.

1. The cross embraces within its *design* all mankind.

"God so loved the *world*; not the Jews merely; or the

Romans ; or the English speaking races : but the world ; that He gave His only begotten Son that *whosoever* believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for *all*."—(1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.) If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father ; Jesus Christ the righteous : and He is the propitiation for our sins : and not for ours only ; but also *for the sins of the whole world*." (1 Jno. ii. 1, 2.) "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the Gospel unto *every creature*." No nation, people, or tongue is excluded. And if anyone asks : is the doctrine of the cross adapted to the wants, capacities, and prejudices of all the various races of men to be met with on the globe ? let the records of our missionary societies answer the question.

But not to pass this question without some consideration, we notice :

2. That it is particularly adapted to the capacities of those whose educational advantages are limited, or as we may call them, the poor.

The comparatively poor, and slightly educated class, has always formed in the past : and must—notwithstanding all the modern improved educational appliances—continue to form the large majority of mankind. And any religious system which fails to meet the needs, or suit the capacities of this class can certainly lay no claim to wisdom. In this, even if in nothing else, all mere systems of philosophy have miserably failed. But in the cross the most illiterate find that which they can both understand and appreciate ; for it brings home to them in a way which no mere verbal teaching could, the fact that notwithstanding their sinfulness, God still loves them. By the cross they are enabled to see and to *feel* the force of St. Paul's words in his epistle to the Romans : "*God commendeth His love towards us*, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." It requires but little mental ability to understand that nothing but love could produce such a sacrifice. And although they may not be able to give a very clear explanation of the Gospel plan of salvation, they know that the cross was endured for them ; this touches their hearts and they are led to love Him ; because He first loved them. Yes ; thank God, "to the poor the Gospel is preached," and not preached in vain.

3. It is adapted to the needs of the man of business.

The world in which we live is a world of toil. There are few in it who can afford to idly float down the stream of time.

With the great majority life is one continual struggle. And even those who find what they are sometimes pleased to call "fortune," more propitious, have their time and energies pretty well occupied in providing for the temporal wants of themselves and their families, and consequently they have little time for indulgence in philosophical speculations or poetical fancies. And therefore whilst a way of salvation such as would have suited those old Greeks, might do very well for those who enjoy that rare commodity, "learned leisure," it would ill suit those who have to eat their bread in the sweat of their face; and to have framed such a system would, to say the least of it, have displayed little wisdom. For, apart from the fact that the great majority would have been necessarily shut out from any hope of heaven, there must ever have been an unholy divorce between religion and secular industry. I am sorry to say there is too much of this, even now, with some people. You often hear people talk of religion as if it consisted of merely saying prayers, reading the Bible and attending church. And they speak of all secular employment as if it were irreligious, as for example when they tell you that they cannot be religious because they have so little time to devote to it: being occupied at their stores, or elsewhere so many hours in the day. As if buying and selling, when done honestly and from proper motives, were not religious acts. Think you my brethren that Jesus of Nazareth was acting less religiously when at the carpenter's bench, than when preaching the sermon on the Mount? No, in each case He was about His Father's business, was doing His duty to God and to man. And He who thus hallowed honest toil, whether of hand or brain, not only approves of our following His example; but also by the cross provided a means of salvation adapted to the needs of those who have to be so engaged.

4. But it is *also* adapted to the capacity of the learned and the studious.

Do not make the mistake of supposing that because the cross is suited to the needs and capacities of the poor, the unlearned and the toiler; it is suited *only* to such. This would be to practically adopt the error of the Greeks mentioned in the text, who would probably have admitted that it might do well enough for the vulgar masses, but was unsuited to the cultivated mind. Of course we, in our day, need no argument to prove our position under this head, as we can point back to the long line of learned men among whom are to be found some of the most gigantic minds and logical acumen, whose works upon the

atonement and and kindred subjects have come down to us. And also to some of the deepest thinkers of the present day, who find in the cross sufficient scope for their faculties and food for their reflection. And how can it be otherwise? Is there not in the love which prompted it, the wisdom which devised it, the power which carried it into execution enough to occupy the mind and elicit the admiration of the greatest intellect? Yes, "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." And when we have exhausted all the powers of the mind upon it, we shall have to take up the language of St. Paul: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out."

III. The wisdom of the cross is seen in the fact that it exalts God and humbles man.

Sin may be defined as rebellion against God. Whether Milton is correct or not in making the sin of the fallen angels to consist in rebellion in heaven, it is not for me to say: but I see no reason for doubting the correctness of his theory. But certain it is that the first sin upon earth was of that nature; and that has constituted the very essence of sin ever since. As St. Paul says: "the natural mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And this rebellion is the result of pride. Rebellion in the state has been defended on the ground that the one rebelled against was an usurper or a tyrant. But no such charge can be brought against God who is the creator, and consequently the lawful ruler of the universe, and who, at the same time, rules in the best interests of His creatures.

Now rebellion against lawful authority wrongs, not only those rebelled against, but also those who rebel.

For example: let the members of a family rebel against the head of the family and depose him from his lawful position, and something very like anarchy will prevail. For while all may agree in refusing obedience to the lawful head, it is not likely they will agree to render obedience to any one member. It is the same only on a larger scale when it is rebellion in the state. When pride has produced rebellion there will be envy and strife; and as St. James says:—"Where envy and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work." And this, alas, is only too true a picture of the present state of the world, brought about by rebellion against God. And as it is desirable that

God and man should be reinstated, if I may so speak, in their proper relative positions ; that God shall receive the homage and honor which are His due ; and that man shall be saved, not only from the consequences of his sins hereafter ; but also from the power of sin here ;—in other words : in order that God's honor and man's good should be promoted by the return of the latter to his allegiance, it was necessary that any plan which had for its object the accomplishing of this should embody in its provisions, evidences, not only of the power, but also of the goodness of God—should be calculated to show man his ingratitude ; and so humble him in his own eyes, and at the same time exalt his Maker, that he, in very shame, as it were, should cease to rebel and come back loyally to the service of his Master.

And let me ask you, my brethern, what could be more calculated to do this than the cross ? Surely, if a sinner can look at the cross unmoved ; can see all that God there gave for him, all that Christ endured for the sole purpose of reclaiming him from sin and Satan, and still deliberately go on in his wickedness, there is nothing that can soften and reclaim him. And this leads me to observe—

IV. The wisdom of the cross is seen by what it has accomplished.

“ Every tree shall be known by its fruits.” And judged by this standard, the wisdom of the cross is apparent to all but the wilfully blind. Look around and see those who were once godless ; living with no object but that of self-gratification ; some of them leading notoriously evil lives ; but who are now walking humbly with their God. Those who were formerly blasphemers, now uniting with God's people in singing His praise. Those who were in time past to be found amongst the desecrators of God's holy day ; now taking their places as teachers in the Sunday school. Those who once devoted all their talents to the service of the devil, now devoting them to the service of God. And again look at that noble band who having caught the spirit of their Master have left home, and friends, and gone forth to the uttermost ends of the earth to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. What has wrought this wonderful change ? What has infused this spirit of self-denial into the hearts of those people ? And what is it that has made them successful ? And then to take a wider range what is it that has wrought such a change in those nations of the earth which now profess and call themselves christian ? Brethren, this mighty influence which is abroad in the earth, making such

wonderful changes for good is none other than the influence of the cross.

But time would fail me to trace the wisdom of the cross through all its phases and I therefore pause. All I have been able to do is to stand, as it were, by the wayside and point out to you some few of the directions in which you may travel and explore the boundless wisdom of Him who is the all—the only wise God. I say point out to you, for I have not been able to go with you beyond a few steps in any direction. But if from what I have said you shall be induced to explore in the different directions indicated; or, to drop metaphor, if you will work out for yourselves the thoughts here little more than suggested, I promise you a rich reward for your labor.

But let me in conclusion endeavour to impress upon you what I conceive to be the highest wisdom on your part; or I would rather say *our* part, for I have no desire to exclude myself.

If the cross is the result of infinite wisdom. If when the all-wise God, devising a way by which he could redeem fallen man without compromising His own justice, or holiness;—a plan which should be effectual in reclaiming the lost, of subduing the heart and purifying the life—He saw this to be the most complete one which infinite skill could construct; and if this wonderful design was carried into effect entirely for our benefit—all of which we believe to be the case—then surely it were the wildest folly to oppose it as is done by those who seek to save themselves: or to be saved in any other way than this one. The highest wisdom of the creature is—under any circumstances—to submit to the will of the Creator. And in this case it is certainly the highest wisdom on the part of those who are lost and need a Saviour, to submit to Him who is able and willing to save.

And finally if the soul of man is of sufficient importance to engage the wisdom of the Infinite in devising means by which it may be rescued from death: certainly we can show no greater wisdom than in valuing that which He values, caring for that for which He cares and in seeking the salvation of that which the cross was designed to save. See to it then my brethren that ye neglect not so great a salvation; but rather give all diligence to make your calling and election sure, and so an entrance shall be given you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And I doubt not that amongst the many thoughts which shall occupy our attention and form the theme of our songs of adoration in heaven, the wisdom of the cross will hold a foremost place.

The Death of the Cross.

“And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.”—*Phil.* ii., 8.

THERE are, perhaps, few passages of Holy Scripture in which the condescension of our blessed Lord is more graphically portrayed than in this and the three preceding verses.

The Apostle being desirous of impressing upon the Philippians the practical virtues of meekness, gentleness, and self sacrifice for the good of others : holds up to them—as is his practice—the example of Christ, who although God, equal to the Father, and sharing in all the glory of heaven ; angels and arch-angels paying Him homage and doing Him service : Yet for our sakes emptied Himself of all this glory, laid it all aside, and came down to this lower world—this world of sin—not in the form of an angel, but in human flesh. And that not in the garb and dignity of a ruler ; but in the humble position of a servant. Though Lord of all, He came not to command ; but to obey.

And this, of itself, was condescension far greater than we can possibly conceive in as much as while we know the meanness of His condition here, we can form no idea of the glory which He laid aside there. But great as was this condescension, He humbled Himself yet further by consenting to die ; and, as if death in itself was not humiliation enough, He, as a climax of His submission, consented to die the most cruel and degrading of all deaths—the death of the cross.

And it is this—the death of the cross—which forms the subject for our present consideration. A subject forming as it does, not only the climax of Christ's humiliation, and the strongest proof possible of His love for us ; but at the same time forming the great central picture, as it were, of that wondrous scheme of redemption, designed by the adorable Trinity in Unity, for our salvation from a state of sin and misery ; a state of spiritual death. It is a subject which we cannot approach without feeling its solemnity and sacredness. We seem, like Moses, to hear the voice of God saying : “put off thy shoes from off thy feet ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” The very contemplation of it inspires us with awe. Think for a moment of the holy Jesus—God incarnate,

hanging upon the accursed tree; made sin for us. Having heaped upon Him the world's guilt. Not only bearing the scorn of men: but also losing, for the time, the smiling presence of His Father, until in the bitterness of His soul He cried, "my God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me." We cannot wonder that all nature seemed to be in sympathy with the holy sufferer: even the sun hiding his face from such a scene of anguish, and the very earth quaking and trembling beneath such a load of guilt and shame.

May God the Holy Ghost enable us to approach this solemn subject in a spirit of deep humility by impressing upon our minds the sad truth that *our* sins helped to crucify Christ: and at the same time in a spirit of fervent gratitude, knowing that it was for *our* sins He consented to die. And that by His death He opened to us the kingdom of heaven, and purchased for us everlasting life.

Let us then in approaching this important subject, consider

I. What the death of the cross involved.

1. It involved physical suffering of the most excruciating kind. In fact we get our word "excruciate" from death by crucifixion.

Picture to yourselves, if you can, our blessed Lord as He appeared on that awful day. Weak and faint through not having broken His fast since the previous evening; and having in the meantime been taken prisoner in the garden and marched as we know He was to the house of Annas, and from that to the palace of Caiaphas where He was kept for some hours and underwent His first trial. From that He had been taken to Pilate's Judgment Hall; thence to Herod and back again to Pilate where He was tried and acquitted, and yet, notwithstanding His acquittal, was scourged and sent to the cross.

Now see Him, with His sacred back cut and bleeding, groaning beneath the weight of the heavy cross to which He was shortly to be nailed. This He carried until, completely exhausted, He could carry it no further, and it was put on other shoulders.

Next see Him transfixed to the cross, by having the rough nails driven through His hands and feet; suffering the most intense agony. At first the body is still further weakened through the loss of blood caused by the nail-wounds, until the flesh swelling around the nails stops the flow. Then comes the burning fever and thirst caused by the awful torture which He endures: until overcome by exhaustion of body; and agony of mind, literally broken-hearted, He yields up His spirit.

My brethren, I can well believe you would prefer being spared such a painful picture : and I can fully sympathize with you : but in order to form an adequate conception of the physical sufferings endured by our blessed Lord on account of our sins, these facts—painful as they are—must be looked in the face.

2. It involved mental suffering beyond, even, our conception.

(1.) Let us look at the *shame* of the cross. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says, He endured the cross, despising—or disregarding—the *shame*.

Crucifixion was, in itself a shameful death, as being the mode, in which death was inflicted upon criminals. It held therefore much the same disgraceful position as hanging does with us. But it was a more shameful death than hanging, inasmuch as, the soldiers being entitled to the clothes of the culprit, they would strip him and leave him almost, if not quite naked, exposed to the public gaze for hours ; or even days. Then in the case of our Saviour there was added to this the shame of ridicule. He had claimed to be the Son of God ; had declared that power was given unto Him over all flesh (Jno. xvi. 2) He had not only healed the sick, restored the lame and opened the eyes of the blind : but even raised the dead to life again by virtue—as He claimed—of this power ; but as His enemies declared by the power of the evil one. And now came their short hour of triumph, and as they stood around or passed by the cross, they reviled Him crying : come down from the cross if thou be the Son of God, and we will believe on thee. " He trusted in God," said some : " let God deliver Him *now* if He will have Him, for He said I am the Son of God." Even the thieves between whom He was crucified, or at least one of them, joined with the rest in insulting Him. If ever there was a case of adding insult to injury, surely this was one. But cruel as this was, and hard to be endured, it was not the most bitter drop in this cup of shame. This was the work of His open and professed enemies, and extreme as it was, was only consistent with their bitter hatred of Him. But where were His professed friends and followers ? Those whom He had instructed, for whom He had prayed, who had enjoyed so much of His company and confidence ? Surely He might expect some sympathy from them. But instead of this they had forsaken Him and fled. Nay, was He not even hanging on the cruel cross through the base betrayal of one of them ? And where was Peter ? The one who above all the rest had declared he would never forsake his Master ; even though his faithfulness should cost him his life ? Only one of the whole number was

found with courage enough to show himself: And he appears, for some time at least, to have stood afar off. To a sensitive nature like that of Jesus; so ready to sympathize with others in their sorrow, and as a consequence, so susceptible of sympathy from others, this public neglect, nay, this *desertion* on the part of his disciples must have been intensely painful and humiliating.

But He had to drink yet deeper of this cup of shame. On account of the expression in *Deut. xxi.*, 23. "He that is hanged is accursed of God;" the Jews had the greatest horror of this mode of death; not so much on account of the terrible suffering which was inflicted by it, bad as that was, as on account of its being an evidence of God's curse having fallen upon them. And hence the fearful degradation which our blessed Lord must have felt Himself to be suffering in the estimation of His countrymen. For in the strong language of St. Paul He was made a "curse."

(2) Then think of the mental suffering He must have endured on account of His Mother who was present and an eye witness of all which her holy Son was undergoing. For remember that Jesus was, not only perfect God, but also perfect man; not only the Son of God, but also the Son of Mary. That He always acknowledged this relationship. Even with His dying breath, making provision for her temporal needs. And what think you must have been His feeling as He looked down from the cross upon her in her anguish; not only sharing with Him, to some extent, the disgrace of the cross; but also suffering all the intensity of sorrow which her relationship to Him—and particularly to such a son—would naturally cause? In fact the prophecy of Simeon was now receiving its complete fulfilment; a sword was indeed piercing through her very soul. The sufferings of a son so pure, so holy, so loving as he was, on account of her grief, must have been far more keen than we can well conceive.

It may be objected to this that knowing as He did that her sorrow would be short-lived; that in fact it would soon be turned into joy by His resurrection from the dead; His sorrow for her would be very much mitigated. But I think my brethren we should do Him a grievous wrong by supposing that He could see her suffering—even for a moment—on His account without feeling it most keenly.

(3.) But greatest of all must have been the agony of mind which He endured as the sin-bearer. He who never did an evil deed, never said a sinful word, never allowed a resting

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place in His mind for a wrong thought: He who shrank from sin, not only as a crime against His Father, grievous to the Holy Spirit and injurious to man: but as being abhorrent to His very nature, was now taking the sinner's place and suffering in the sinner's stead. Was being dealt with by His Father as if really guilty, in so much that He who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, withdrew, as it were, His presence from Him: which led Him, as already noticed, to cry, "my God, my God, why hast *Thou* forsaken me."

As though He had said: the scorn and contempt of mine enemies I might expect; even the desertion of my disciples I could endure; but to be deprived of *Thy* favour is beyond all endurance. Brethren who shall attempt to estimate the sufferings of body and mind endured by the meek and lowly Jesus while hanging on the cross? And all, be it remembered, for us. Yes: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all."

Let us now pass on to notice.

II. What the death of the cross revealed.

1. It revealed the awful nature of sin.

Did it ever occur to you, how lightly we regard sin—as sin? If it assumes the form of a crime against the state, the law of the land deals with it according to its nature and extent. If it be an offence against society, we resent it as becomes our dignity. But if it be a sin against God only we, as a rule, deal very leniently with it. In other words we judge of it rather by the way in which it affects us than by what it is in itself. And even judging it thus, it is surprising that men can view it so indifferently as they generally do. For that which has wrought such terrible havoc in the world, which has produced envy, hatred and malice, which has fomented wars and tumults until the earth is full of blood: that which is the source of sickness, pain and death, could scarcely—by the thoughtful mind—be looked upon as anything else than awful in its nature.

In the old testament scriptures God has made known unto us how hateful sin is to Him; not only by revealing unto us His own holiness, and giving the moral law, but also by the way in which He inflicted punishment upon those who committed sin. But never, until revealed by the cross could its true nature be fully understood. Never, until the price of man's redemption had been paid, could it be fully known what a tremendous gulf sin had placed between him and his Maker.

Not all the blood of bulls and of goats which had flowed from Judah's altar from the time when it was first erected by Moses in the wilderness until the day of the crucifixion ; all the daily, morning and evening sacrifices ; all the sin and trespass offerings ; all the victims slain on each returning day of atonement, could suffice to put away sin and make reconciliation. To accomplish this it was necessary that the Lamb of God slain—in the councils of the triune Godhead—from the foundation of the world, should offer Himself without spot to God. Could anything of less value have sufficed think you that Christ would have had to pay so great a price ? Hear Him in His bitter agony in the garden crying with all the energy of His anguish-riven soul : “O my Father if it be possible let this cup pass from me.” If there be any other means by which the demands of Thy justice may be met, and man's sin atoned for, O let me not drink its bitter draught. And surely if sin had been of such a nature that divine wisdom could have devised any other sacrifice which should have been at all adequate to the requirements of the case, our Lord's prayer would have been answered.

And yet, alas, how little do men, generally, realize of its true nature. Could those who talk so glibly about the sins indulged in by so many of our young men as mere bits of youthful folly, as *only* the sowing of their wild-oats ; who speak of the way in which God's holy name is dishonoured as merely a little want of thought ; who tell you that the frightful profanation of God's holy day—now so prevalent, is just a little innocent recreation of mind and body ; and who excuse many of the forms of dishonesty in business as being nothing more than bits of sharp practice rendered necessary by the competition in trade. Could those people be prevailed upon to view sin as revealed by the death of the cross : surely they would no longer continue to treat it as a matter of minor importance, but would view it, and act towards it, as their greatest enemy ; and seek by all, and every means to subdue it.

2. It revealed the justice of God.

I know this theme is distasteful to many in our day. It is quite fashionable now to talk about God's love ; but the sterner qualities of His nature are, to a large extent ignored. In fact it is doubtful whether a considerable portion of the rising generation will not grow up with the idea that God's character is entirely one-sided, that His love so completely overpowers His other attributes that they practically lie dormant. And I fear, my brethren, that the Church of to-day fails to realize the serious nature of this error.

In the first place it is most dishonoring to God ; for not only does it make Him appear imperfect in His character, but it *necessarily* lessens our reverence for Him. For who can even respect one whose love amounts to weakness ?—who is so tender-hearted that sooner than inflict punishment upon the offender He will connive at the transgression of his own laws ? Let any military commander, teacher of youth, or parent, try it and he will soon be convinced, not only of his utter incapacity to maintain his authority, and command obedience, but also to retain even the semblance of respect.

In the next place it is injurious to man ; for not only does it loosen the restraints upon the vicious and viciously inclined, but even with the better classes it makes a high code of morals more a matter of present profit and convenience than anything else. It cannot be otherwise ; for if we believe God to be so lenient as to shut *His* eyes to the commission of sin, *we* can scarcely think it a very serious matter in its bearing upon ourselves.

Now the death of the cross not only revealed the awful nature of sin which could be atoned for by nothing less than the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, but it also revealed the fact that God's justice demanded the full price, and could be satisfied with nothing less. Much as the Father loved His Son, He, as man's redeemer, must drain the cup to its very dregs. And the practical lesson for us is this :—If God's justice demands full satisfaction, and we refuse to accept, or to avail ourselves of the satisfaction made by Christ for us, we must expect justice and not mercy when we appear to render an account for the deeds done in the body.

3. It revealed the *love* of God : but as I have dwelt upon that phase of the cross in a previous sermon, I need not repeat myself here, except to say that the more we contemplate the love of Christ as displayed in the death of the cross, the more shall we love Him. And as love is the very root of acceptable service, we cannot over-estimate the importance of this duty. And I would also urge upon you, my brethren, the important duty and high privilege of commemorating His death in the manner appointed by Himself when He said, " This do in remembrance of me."

And now let us, in conclusion, notice,

III. What the death of the cross demands.

Now it follows as a matter of course that if the sufferings of Christ were such as have been here but feebly described ; If all this pain of body and agony of mind was endured on our

account. If by this cruel death Christ opened to us the kingdom of heaven, and purchased, for us, everlasting life. And if these facts have been duly pondered in our minds, and have had their due and proper influence upon our hearts ; we shall instinctively take up the language of the psalmist and ask : " What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits." If we have a due sense of God's " inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ," we shall most certainly strive to show forth our thankfulness not only with our lips, but also in our lives. And yet how few do this. How many there are who never make an attempt to render any active service to God ; and seem to think they ought to be congratulated on the ground that they do no *harm*. But to pass these by for the present ; let us ask ourselves what the death of the cross demands from us. And we can probably each find his own answer by what he gives in return for that sacrifice. I fear, my brethren, that applying this test will reveal a sad want of gratitude on the part of most of us. You who never enter the house of God more than once each returning Lord's day, and never think of coming into it during the week, who never give towards the support of the Church or any other work of the Lord, one cent more than you can help. Do you suppose that you are giving to Christ all that His sufferings for you demand ? Or you who come more regularly and pay more cheerfully ; but who, instead of obeying your Lord's dying command, Sunday after Sunday coldly turn your backs upon His Holy Table, and thus persistently show your utter disregard for His wishes ; think you that that is a fitting return to make Him for all that He endured for you ? Or those of you who do occasionally meet around the Table of you Lord, and commemorate that love wherewith He loved you when He gave Himself for you, but who are content to come, as it were, alone ; who never seek to make known to others the blessings you enjoy ; who never, like Moses say, " come thou with us and we will do thee good ;" who are in fact selfishly satisfied with securing your own salvation without troubling about the salvation of others ; think you that this is a sufficient service to render unto Him who gave His life a ransom for you ? No my dear brethren : nor is the best service rendered by any of us, anything like a fitting return for the death of the cross. What after all is our best service ? Our cold, heartless prayers ; our mere routine of duties ; and our half-hearted praises ? They are not worthy to be mentioned as a return for God's greatest of all gifts, the gift of His Son. Nor can the

demand made upon us by the death of the cross be met by anything short of the full surrender of *ourselves*. No number of prayers however earnest and faithful: no thanksgiving however full of gratitude: no christian duties however hearty and unselfish, apart from the entire yielding up of the whole man, body, soul and spirit to God, can satisfy the demands of the death of the cross.

“ Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

O how far short of our duty have we all fallen in this matter. What need we have to emphasize our confession: “ We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us.” But thank God: “ if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”. Let us then go to Him, not only confessing our short-comings in the past, but also rededicating ourselves to His service. Let us approach Him in the words of our beautiful liturgy:—“ Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee.”

The Peace of the Cross.

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“Having made peace through the blood of His cross.”—*Col. i., 20.*

THE assertion of the Apostle, in this verse, that God, by Christ, made peace to the reconciling of *all things*—things on earth, and things in heaven—to Himself, has led to considerable discussion among theologians as to how far the rest of creation is affected by the fall of man. And in what sense things in heaven, the angels for example, can be said to be reconciled by the act of redemption.

It is not my intention, now, to enter into that question : but simply to direct your attention to that act and its results in so far only as they affect the human race.

Now the expression, “making peace,” implies a state of enmity, variance ; or disquietude. For where there is no enmity ; or discord, there is no need of any—there can be, no peace maker. And in order to know the nature of the peace, made or brought about, it is necessary to know the nature of the hostilities, disturbance or discord previously prevailing. For instance we may have nation warring against nation, subjects rebelling against their sovereign ; or discord among the various members of a community, or family. And whoever seeks to make peace will have to frame his measures according to the requirements of the case, i. e., the nature of the disturbance ; whether it be by the interposition of authority, the proposal of conciliatory measures ; or the offering of satisfaction to those who are the wronged.

Our present subject will lead us therefore to consider :

I. The nature and extent of the discord prevailing and
II. How far this evil was remedied, and peace restored by the blood of the cross.

I. The nature and extent of the enmity and discord prevailing.

1. Let us view it as existing between God and man. And being, as was observed in a previous sermon, of the nature of rebellion. God, as we all know, created man upright. And so long as he remained sinless, he was happy in the enjoyment of his Maker's favour ; holding pleasing and profitable intercourse with Him. But even in his sinless state man could not approach God on terms of equality. God was the Creator ; man

the creature. God the Sovereign ; man the subject. And as such it was man's interest, no less than his duty, to obey fully and unreservedly. And had he done so, there would have been no interference with, or suspension of that harmony of which we read when "God saw all that He had made ; and behold it was very good."

But man, listening to the tempter, began to doubt God's word as to the result of disobedience, and half question His disinterestedness in prohibiting his eating of the particular tree shown to him. And apparently believing that the advantages to be derived from eating would fully compensate him for whatever loss—if any—which he might sustain, he took upon himself to disobey. And however trivial the mere act of disobedience might appear in itself, it contained all the elements of rebellion. And God had no choice—if we may so speak—but to accept it as such. His word had been disbelieved, His command disobeyed, and His authority set at defiance. And from that moment all peace and harmony between them necessarily ceased. Man was no more to hear with delight "the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day : " was no longer to hold loving intercourse with Him : was no longer to receive the gracious recognition of an obedient son and servant. He was no longer to be even allowed to remain in his hitherto happy home : but must go forth as an alien to contend with the thorns and briers of the outer world. From that time the distance between them was to be as wide as perfect holiness on the one hand, and sin and pollution on the other hand are apart from each other. For man had not committed what may be called a mere *act* of sin ; but had *deliberately* set God's command at nought ; had, as it were, sinned upon principle ; and had by so doing entirely alienated himself from God. His very nature became corrupted and fallen. This fallen nature we—his posterity—inherit, and so—as the ninth article of the Church says :—Everyone born into the world is very far gone from original righteousness. And as a natural consequence of inheriting this fallen *nature*, man might be expected to indulge in sinful *acts*. And that this is, and always has been, the case all history, sacred and profane, as well as our own observation fully testify. Moses tells us (Gen. vi. 12)—that "God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt, for *all flesh* had corrupted his way upon the earth." And although God destroyed all the then inhabitants of the earth, with the exception of one family, yet, "this infection of nature" remaining, sin soon overspread the earth again.

And David (ps. xiv.) represents God as again looking down upon the earth with much the same result as before: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one." And the picture, drawn by St. Paul, in the 1st chap. of Rom. and elsewhere, of the world in his day is evidence enough of how far man had become alienated from God by wicked works.

Here then we see, on the one hand, God claiming the right to rule over man, and commanding him to live a life of holy obedience; and on the other hand, man claiming the right to please himself and showing his utter disregard for God's laws by living a life of sinful disobedience; and hence, instead of that peace and harmony which ought to exist between God and man, the Creator and the creature, we have enmity and discord.

2. As existing between man and man.

Sin is essentially selfish. The first act of sin took the form of selfishness, and that is the form it has borne ever since; and thus we have had from the very first each one seeking his own pleasure or profit, and to a large extent ignoring the wishes, or even the rights of others. Man seeking to over-reach his fellow man, and failing in the attempt, becoming envious of him. This soon showed itself in Adam's own immediate family, Cain being so completely under the influence of envy as to murder his brother. And this state of inter-personal strife has continued ever since. Scripture history abounds with it. Secular history is largely composed of it. It has overturned dynasties, beheaded kings, slain its millions upon the battle-field, committed innumerable murders, even staining the hand of the child in the life-blood of the parent, and the hand of the parent in the blood of the child. It has also entered the Church and split it up into sects and factions almost innumerable, each one excommunicating the other, until it has sometimes appeared that the best test of sound membership was the bitterest hatred of all outside the narrow limits of their own "Ebenezer." If the secret history of all the sects which have broken off from the Church and from each other could be written, it would demonstrate the fact that personal pique, envy, or self-seeking was at the bottom of a very large majority of the ruptures; and if we were permitted to see as God sees, and read motives as he reads them, we should stand aghast at the amount of self-interest and personal vanity which is at the bottom of many of the so-called religious

movements of the present day. A peep behind the scenes, such as I have had on one or two occasions, would reveal some of the most contemptible devices, adopted by professing christians, and by people who even profess to believe that one sect is just as good as another, for the accomplishment of selfish and sectarian purposes; would reveal an amount of meanness that would astonish the uninitiated.

And thus we have in the political world, the commercial world, the social world, and even in the religious world, wherever we turn, man against man, to such an extent that a feeling of distrust has become the chronic state of society; and this leads me to observe—

3. That this disquietude and want of peace exists also within the individual man.

Man was created not only sinless and *morally* fit to hold intercourse with God, but also endowed with faculties which made him capable of so doing—faculties adapted to far higher pursuits than the mere acquirement of wealth, fame, or transient pleasure, which in short seem to make him a kind of connecting link between heaven and earth, and which were doubtless intended to control the lower ones. Now, whatever else sin did, it certainly seems to have reversed this order of things and to have brought those higher powers largely under the control of the lower and animal ones. But it did not annihilate them. They still exist, and not only so, but they make themselves heard as they plead at the bar of conscience and protest against being put under subordination to those faculties which they were intended to govern; and although they may be, and doubtless often are kept in check, and their voice almost drowned by the bustle and excitement of worldly business, or pleasure, yet they will not be entirely silenced,—or at least, the cases in which they are are few—and there are times when they will make themselves heard in spite of all opposition; and hence the inner disquietude of which I am speaking. Perhaps few of us are aware of the numerous and severe struggles which are taking place within the breasts of many who succeed in wearing a calm countenance. No matter how free from anxiety persons may appear when in the midst of their gay companions, there are few who will not tell you—if they honestly tell the truth about such matters—that when left alone with God and their own conscience, they have serious misgivings as to the wisdom of the course they are pursuing, while many will candidly confess that they are very far from enjoying real happiness. They feel out of harmony with

themselves. There is something wrong, which causes a feeling of disquietude. In short, they have not peace.

Thus we have seen a threefold need of peace:—1. Peace between God and man—a restoration of that harmony which was broken by the fall. 2. Peace between man and man—a feeling of brotherhood—a oneness of object and unity of purpose in life. 3. Peace within—a bringing of all the faculties into harmony with each other—a restoring of each to its proper place, and letting it move in its proper sphere.

We now proceed to notice.

II. How far this evil was remedied, and the want supplied by the blood of the cross.

Now the first thing necessary in order to make peace between God and man was either for man to cease to rebel and sue for mercy on whatever conditions God was pleased to grant it; or for God to offer certain conditions upon which He would receive man back again to His favour. And this latter is what God has done. Though He is the wronged one yet He was the first to move in the matter of reconciliation. And by giving Christ, He not only showed Himself to be desirous of terminating this state of enmity; but also made known the conditions upon which it should cease. And although His justice could not allow sin to go unatoned for, He provided the one who should atone for it. Hence the incarnation. This is why God the Son left the throne of His glory and became clothed in human flesh. He who was "God, of the substance of His Father before the worlds: became man, of the substance of His mother born in the world" that He as the second Adam might remedy the evil wrought by the first Adam. That He might keep the law which the other had broken. That He might lead a life of holy obedience, and then by the sacrifice of Himself, make reconciliation between God and man.

This was foretold of Him by the prophet Isaiah: "He was wounded for our transgressions: He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our *peace* was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

This He Himself declared to be His mission upon earth: "The Son of man came, not to be ministered unto: but to minister; and to give His life a ransom for many." "I lay down my life for the sheep."

This is the testimony of the Holy Ghost concerning Him: "He was delivered for our offences." "He died *for our sins*

according to the scriptures." "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Christ hath once suffered for us ; the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

Thus, by the blood of the cross, is met the demands of God's justice ; for Christ then offered a full and sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world. And now all who will may come and receive, not only remission of sins past ; but adoption into the sonship of God. By the gift of His Son God made the offer of peace. By the blood of the cross He signed—as it were, the covenant of peace on His part. And now all who will accept those conditions ; that is all who repenting of their sins believe in Christ, are brought into this covenant of peace, and thus "being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But this is not all. For being at peace with God : having ceased to rebel against Him. Having submitted our wills to His will : having learned to look to Him as our reconciled Father ; to love Him and trust in Him : and having, by the influence and aid of the Holy Spirit, brought the faculties of the animal soul, and the lusts of the flesh into subjection to the higher faculties of the spirit so that sin no longer *reigns* in our mortal body, we have peace within. Not only that peace which proceeds from a knowledge of sins forgiven and of reconciliation to God : but also a peace which is the result of the various faculties being brought into harmony. And thus the peace of "God which passeth all understanding," keeps our "hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

But the blood of the cross is that by which God seeks, not only to reconcile the world unto Himself ; but to reconcile to each other and knit together in one all the nations, families and individuals of which the world is composed. And just in proportion as men receive Christ, and walk in Him, is this object accomplished. This was first seen in the bringing together into one body, Jew and Gentile. Before the coming and death of Christ they were divided into separate, and to a large extent, hostile bodies. But when Christ, by the blood of His Cross, had made peace, and opened a new way of access to God ; both Jew and Gentile ; those who had been hitherto nigh, and those who had been afar off, were brought *together* into closer communion with God and with each other. "For He is our peace," says St. Paul, "who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us ; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances ; for to make in Him-

self of twain one new man, so making peace ; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." And it is by the preaching of the cross, and by our acceptance of Christ as our common Saviour, trusting in, and looking unto God as our common Father, and being baptized into the faith of Christ, in the name of the Holy Trinity ; and so becoming members of the one Holy Catholic Church : that God would unite together all the various tribes of men. And by bringing us into this one faith give us a feeling of common brotherhood : all being the children of one Father ; all having one main object in life : all travelling towards the one home.

How beautifully this is symbolized by the recital of the creed in our public services. When standing together in God's House and presence, we declare our belief in God the Father Almighty : that is in one God who is the Father of us all. Who is above all, and in all, and through all. And so we have one God : and one Father. And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary : that is in the incarnation of the Son of God who took upon Himself our common humanity. And that He suffered for us ; died and was buried : that is, that He paid the penalty due on account of our transgression. And that He rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven where He is our common representative, the first-fruits of the general resurrection : and where He ever liveth to make intercession for us. And in the Holy Ghost who is the sanctifier of all the elect people of God. And in the Holy Catholic Church. The one great communion of the faithful knit together in Christ Jesus :—

“ Elect from every nation
Yet one e'er all the earth ;
Their charter of salvation
One Lord, one Faith, one Birth.”

The one Catholic Church which embraces, not only all the faithful now upon earth : but also all those who have passed over and gone before, and are waiting in rest and peace for the time when our full and final salvation shall be accomplished—even the redemption of the body : when that being raised incorruptible and reunited with its companion spirit, we shall enter into the full joy of our Lord.

The one Catholic Church of which the poet sings thus :—

The saints on earth and those above
But one communion make :
Joined to their Lord in bonds of love
All of His grace partake.

One family we dwell in Him
 One Church, above, beneath,
 Tho' now divided by the stream,
 The narrow stream of death.

One army of the living God,
 To His command we bow ;
 Part of the host have crossed the flood
 And part are crossing now.

And thus we believe in the communion of saints. All and each having communion with Christ as the head of the body : and through Him communion with each other.

And all this, my brethren, is the result of the cross. God having made peace through, or by means of, the blood of Christ's cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, has broken down, first the wall of partition between Himself and us, and secondly, the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile ; between the nations, tribes and castes of the earth thus making, in the fullest and completest sense, peace.

But you may be ready to ask : Why then have we yet so much strife and envying ? Why have we so many vain janglings and disputes ? Why does man still strive with his fellow man until the hand of almost every one seems to be against his brother ? Why is it that the din of war is not hushed : that the tears of the widow and the mother still flow, and their wailings, on account of their slaughtered ones, are still heard in the land ? It is because men have refused to accept God's terms of peace. They love the world and the things of the world ; and the love of the Father is not in them. Some there are who openly repudiate those conditions : who, like those mentioned by our Lord, will not come to the light, but love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. Others are ready enough to confess Christ with their lips : but their hearts are far from Him.

It is because men thus refuse to accept peace on God's terms, refuse to forsake their sins ; refuse to submit themselves "wholly to His holy will and pleasure," that universal peace is not established. But thank God there have been, and are millions who have accepted and enjoyed, and do enjoy this peace with God and within themselves : and as far as *they* are concerned with their fellow men, and, thank God, there are not wanting "signs of the times" which point to a general improvement in this respect. The labors of the missionaries abroad were never crowned with such success as at present. In the home field there is great activity which meets with some measure of success. Though war is still rife and awfully destructive in its nature—the modern weapon killing its tens of

thousands where the old one scarcely killed its thousand—yet all will admit that it is carried on more humanely than formerly, while there is a greater readiness to submit international disputes to arbitration than in time past. And many are found who are not afraid to denounce war altogether.

For this we should ever pray. But we must remember that it is out of the corrupt heart of man that all these envyings and disputings which lead to war arise : and that the right and only way of promoting peace upon earth is by being at peace with God.

And now, my brethren, it only remains for me to ask each of you if you know anything about this peace. Have you ceased to rebel against God? Have you been to Him and acknowledged your sinfulness, accepted Christ as your Redeemer, your High Priest and Intercessor, the captain of your salvation; trusting wholly and entirely to His merits for the forgiveness of sins; looking only to Him as the way by which to come to the Father; and being fully determined by God's grace to take up your cross daily and follow Him "through good report and ill?" For depend upon it brethren, God will accept no half service. We can have no peace with Him without giving Him the heart. Neither can we have real peace within so long as we keep back part of the price. A full surrender of self to God is not only His due; but is the only way by which we can enjoy that peace which passeth understanding: by which we can be truly happy here and live worthy of complete happiness hereafter. And to those who are in the enjoyment of this peace let me say, that the very fact of enjoying it ought to make you anxious for others to share the blessing with you; and your duty to God, and to the world, is to strive by every means to be in the fullest sense possible a peace maker; seeking to make known the conditions upon which people may be at peace with God, and persuading them to accept peace on those conditions; promoting peace in the church, peace in the family, peace in the world, ever remembering the words of our blessed Lord, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God."

And may "the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ;" and "the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means." Amen.

The Self-denial of the Cross.

— Christ pleased not Himself.—*Rom. xv. 3.*

It may be necessary at the commencement to guard the text against misapplication. It must not be understood as teaching that Christ was opposed to undertaking the work of our redemption, and of bearing the suffering which it entailed. This He voluntarily undertook, for there can be no dissensions or differences of opinion or sentiment between the persons of the Holy Trinity; all three, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, will the salvation of man, and each performs His part in the mighty plan. What the Apostle here asserts is, that Christ did not consult his own ease or pleasure, but cheerfully gave up all consideration of self, and gave Himself entirely to the work of benefiting others. Instead of consulting His own glory in Heaven He laid it aside and took up His abode on earth; and having done that He, instead of seeking His own ease and comfort, voluntarily endured hardship, suffering reproaches, scorn, scourging, and death itself, for the benefit of others; yea, and those his enemies. And this fact St. Paul alludes to in the words of the text, for the purpose of adding weight to the arguments and exhortations of the preceding chapter, his argument being, that if Christ acted thus, we who bear His name and profess to be His followers ought to do the same: more particularly, should we be ready to bear with the weaknesses of each other as members of Christ's body the Church.

This subject of forgetfulness of self and consideration for others I purpose discussing briefly as a fit and practical conclusion to this course of sermons.

Self-denial is an essential part of Christianity. It was, as we have just observed, founded by self-denial. It has been, and is still to be propagated by self-denial; and without self-denial it cannot thrive. This truth our Lord taught, not by example only, but also by precept. "From that time forth," says St. Matthew, "began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." And when Peter, to whom, with the rest of the disciples, this was unwelcome news, began to expostulate with Him, He not only rebuked him for so doing, but proceeded

at once to assure them that not only was this the case, but that all who would be His followers must also be prepared to suffer—"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it : and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it."

Now we know that God cannot take delight in the suffering of any of His creatures : that He wills our happiness here, as well as hereafter : that He does not wish us to be deprived of anything which is for our real good : and that consequently there must be some wise purpose to be accomplished by this self-denial and cross-bearing.

Let us then consider a few of the more prominent reasons why the self-denial of the cross should be cheerfully undertaken by christians.

I. It is absolutely necessary to our own spiritual life and advancement.

This will be the more readily seen by taking into consideration the effect of its opposite—self-indulgence.

Self-indulgence is always injurious under any circumstances. And a person who is guilty of it is never expected to be of much service either to himself or any body else ; as it produces indolence, peevishness and often disease. It unfits a man for undertaking, with any prospect of success, any important business. And particularly, does it render him incapable of successfully competing with others. And if this is the case—as all will admit it is—in matters of the world ; it is equally so in religious matters. The christian life is essentially one of warfare. Not only has the christian to contend with foes without ; but also those that are within. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit," says St. Paul. And if the lusts of the flesh are indulged there can be no spiritual growth : for those appetites and propensities when not checked must of necessity clog in their action, and weaken in their force the higher powers of the soul. And by fleshly lusts is not meant merely the grosser animal appetites ; but all that constitutes the desires and tendencies of the lower nature. Take avarice for example. Let that be indulged, and the result will be such a complete absorption of all the powers of the mind by the over-powering love of wealth and the entire devotion of all the time and talents of the individual to the acquisition of this world's goods, that the soul will be entirely neglected, its powers weakened, and it become an easy prey to the enemy.

Then, as another illustration, take pride. The love of display. Indulge that, and you will soon find your time and mind so occupied with such frivolous matters as what you are to wear, how and when you are to wear it. Where you ought to go : and with whom associate. How best to attract attention to yourself, and by what means maintain your dignity : until your poor shrivelled up soul will be fitted for no better occupation than that of a butterfly.

Then again—take sloth : not an uncommon lust of the flesh. Yield to this and you will never make spiritual progress. It will either keep you in such ignorance of your spiritual condition and such sleepy indifference to all the requirements of the soul, as to deprive you of all concern about it : or else induce you to postpone all action necessary to the improvement of that condition, so that you will never be able to advance. And if such be the effect of these—so to speak—refined lusts of the flesh ; what must be the effect of such as gluttony, drunkenness and uncleanness ?

It will therefore be seen at a glance why a man, for his own sake, should deny himself. And why St. Peter should so emphatically warn us against the indulgence of the flesh.—“ Dearly beloved ” says St. Peter, “ I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.”

But not only have we to resist the flesh : but we have to contend with other and mightier enemies : “ We wrestle not against flesh and blood,” says St. Paul—that is, not merely against flesh and blood—“ but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” And while self-indulgence unfits us to contend with those forces, self-denial braces and strengthens us for the fight ; and enables us by God’s grace to cope *successfully* with them.

Self-denial merely as a mode of discipline, even if there were no other advantage accruing from it, would well repay all who practised it : for it is impossible to use self-restraint, and by so doing gain a victory over self, without feeling all the better for it. And those who never won such a victory have no idea of the luxury they have missed. But when our eternal destiny depends largely upon the result of these encounters with our spiritual foes, the importance of self-denial becomes immense. St. Paul fully understood this, and hence he says :—“ I therefore so run, not as uncertainly ; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air ; but I keep under my body, and bring it

into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

II. It is only by self-denial that we can mutually benefit each other, and so promote the welfare of the Church.

There is, I believe, no truth more frequently asserted, and its duties more emphatically enforced by St. Paul, than the close connexion between, and interdependence of, the individual members of the Church, as being but parts of a great whole. This he generally illustrates by the human body, sometimes for the purpose of enforcing the necessity of purity, as in *1 Cor. vi.*; sometimes for the purpose of teaching humility and diligence, as in *Rom. xii.*; and sometimes with the view of showing the necessity of mutual sympathy with, and consideration of each other, and of preventing division, as in *1 Cor. xii.*

Now this close connexion and mutual dependence demands from each a consideration of the wants and weaknesses of the others, not only as an act of christian charity, but as being essential to the development and prosperity of the whole Church. Men are differently constituted, both physically and mentally, and not only so, but they are necessarily occupying different stages of spiritual advancement, and consequently, if each one seeks to please and benefit only himself, we will by the very fact, and in the act of so doing, interfere with the rights, privileges and requirements of others. And there is a great deal too much of this in church matters. One man has certain ideas and tastes with regard to singing, and he would have all that part of the service arranged to suit himself, no matter how many would prefer a different arrangement. Another has a preference for certain subjects being treated of in the pulpit, and he would have the minister almost continually harping upon his two or three favorite strings, no matter how monotonous it might be to others. Nay, though their souls might be starving for other food, it would matter little to him so long as he was supplied with his favorite dish.

Now, a moment's reflection is sufficient to convince any one that such conduct, if indulged in by the different members of a church, could only end in disruption. And the Church as a body could no more continue to exist under such a regime than the human body could continue to live if it received nutriment for only one of its constituent parts. And hence, the duty—the necessity of each one seeking to "please his neighbour for his good to edification." For, by building up each other we build up the whole. Well would it be for the Church at large, and for each member in particular if this were more realized

and acted upon. If, instead of each one claiming the right to please himself, even though by so doing he may injure another, each one would "follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another," what a different state of things we should have in the Church at large to-day. If, where we too often have mutual recrimination and distrust, we had mutual concession and confidence. If mutual faultfinding and execration could be replaced by mutual consultation and prayer. If each, instead of seeking to excel in that which shall increase his own dignity or pleasure, would strive to excel to the edifying of the church. If, in short, each one would seek to exercise that charity which "suffereth long and is kind," which envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." That charity which "seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked and thinketh no evil." Then indeed would our Zion be "a praise in the earth." "A crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God." Then should we have even here, a fore-taste of that peace and happiness enjoyed by the Church triumphant in glory.

III. It is only by self-denial that we can materially influence the world and win it to Christ.

Let us ever remember that the world judges christianity, not by its creeds and dogmas, not by the number and beauty of its churches, not by the eloquence of its preachers; but by the lives of its professors. And although it may be an easy matter to prove them to be wrong in so doing; to prove such a test to be unfair to both the religion and its founder; it nevertheless remains a fixed fact; and will doubtless continue so, at least until the end of this dispensation. And we have to deal with the world as it is; and not as we would have it. And even after all we can scarcely blame them for judging it by what it produces. And if they see those who *profess* to be living exponents of the religion of Christ, living lives so much like the rest of mankind as to be scarcely distinguishable from them, we cannot altogether wonder at their declining to make any profession at all. And He who "knew what was in man," and how he is influenced for good, or for evil, has clearly laid down, and left on record, our duty in this respect: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Not hear your good arguments: "but see your good works." You may be able to give very good reasons why people ought to deny themselves; and take up their cross, and follow Christ: but your argument will have little weight if those who hear it

know you to be living a life of selfish indulgence. You may be able to make a very eloquent appeal on behalf of missions : but unless your own subscription bears something like a fair proportion to your means, your eloquence is not likely to affect the pockets of your hearers to any great extent. You may lament the extravagance of the modern fashions and the showy nature of the dresses of the present day : but in order to impress upon the minds of your neighbours the idea that you look upon it as being contrary to christian simplicity, it will be necessary for you to relinquish it your self and dare to be singular. And you may denounce the luxuriousness and selfishness of the age for a long time, and with a good deal of vigour too, without producing much effect, unless you set an *example* of simplicity and self-denial. For example : it would take a good deal of argument on your part to convince a man that a glass of rum would do him harm, if he knew that you took ale with your dinner, and whiskey punch before you went to bed. The fact is, as already stated we are judged not so much by our words—by our professions, as by our works. And I am bold enough to affirm that a great deal of the irreligion of to-day is largely owing to the self-indulgence of professing christians. I know the pulpit gets a good deal of the blame, and I, as a minister of the gospel, have no desire to deny that it has its share of the blame to bear. I admit the general weakness of the pulpit of the present day ; but with two, and often three sermons to prepare and preach each week ; with the endless rounds of visiting the sick—and as far as time will permit—the well also ; not to mention the “ thousand and one ” other demands made upon a clergyman’s time ; I confess myself unable to see how it can be otherwise. A clergyman has, as a rule, to prepare his sermons during the intervals between his other engagements, often when the majority of his congregation is in bed ; and in a large number of cases he has but little help in the shape of good commentaries and other books, and it is not to be wondered at that they should be tame and common place. Then again, he has very much to discourage him, for it not uncommonly happens that when he has taken special pains with the preparation of a subject, spending great care and much time, and even prayer upon it, he sees by the listlessness of his hearers that it is not appreciated, while perhaps some “ off-hand ” address which, for want of real matter he makes a little lively in manner, is spoken about as a good sermon. The fact is, the majority of people come to church expecting to hear a religious discourse ; they hear it,

and provided it does not exceed twenty-five minutes they are satisfied. By the time they go to bed the text, theme and all are forgotten. On Monday morning they enter upon their weekly occupation, while the clergyman again commences his round of multitudinous duties, and begins to arrange ideas for his next Sunday's sermons, knowing that they will have about the same influence upon his congregation as the last. Of course there are exceptions. Here and there is to be found a man of genuine originality and real talent who rises above all these drawbacks; but they are few. No doubt they have many would-be imitators who by dint of mere ranting and the bandying about of a few well worn, but *badly used* texts of Scripture, succeed in collecting around them a few dozens of shallow minded impressible people who become noted, not for their love to God and man, not for excelling in good works; but for red hot sectarianism and hatred of all who differ from them. Now, while admitting that the pulpit might be improved with decided advantage to the Church, I maintain that the real want of the present day is more genuine self-denial on the part of the members both clerical and lay. A greater readiness to spend and be spent in the service of Christ. We have an immense amount of machinery in operation in the present day. We have meetings of all kinds, we have evangelists innumerable, both male and female, we see people running hither and thither, and if we were to judge the age by its general activity, we should have to pronounce it a very religious one. But judging as the world judges—and to a large extent rightly—much of this is little better than religious dissipation. And alas christian self-denial has little existence except in name.

IV. It is only by self-denial that we can shew our gratitude to Christ and make Him some small return for all that He has done for us.

That every believer in Christ feels grateful to Him for all the "benefits of His passion," may I presume, be assumed, for it seems impossible that it can be otherwise. And this being the case it is only natural that we should seek some way by which to *show forth* that gratitude, and in this spirit we pray twice every Sunday in our public services. In that beautiful form of general thanksgiving, after thanking God for all His "goodness and loving kindness," we proceed thus: "We bless Thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for Thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ: for the means of grace and for the hope of glory. And we beseech Thee give us that due

sense of all Thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, *and that we shew forth Thy praise not only with our lips, but in our lives.*" And how can we do this but by denying ourselves for the good of others?

O, that all those who name the name of Christ would do this. If all professing christians would deny themselves a little with respect to wines and other intoxicating drinks, what a host of drunkards would be saved, and an amount of drunkenness prevented. If they would only deny themselves in regard to a few of the luxuries in which they indulge, what an amount of money might be devoted to the work of the Lord, both at home and abroad. If they would only deny themselves a little of their ease and a few of their spare hours, how many wretched homes might be improved and sad hearts lightened. O brethren, when we look around and see all the sin and misery that abounds, and think of how little concern it gives us; and how little we deny ourselves for the sake of preventing or reducing it; is it not enough to make us ashamed of ourselves? And to talk about our love of Christ without in some tangible way denying ourselves for His sake, sounds very much like mockery. May God in His infinite mercy arouse the Church from her slumber to do her duty in this matter.

And now, my brethren, I have finished the course of sermons announced at the beginning of Lent. And no one is more sensible than I am how utterly I have failed to do justice to the subjects comprising the course. But if, by God's blessing, I have been enabled in any measure to exalt Christ, to give you a clearer conception of that self-denying love wherewith He loved, and still loves you. Of the completeness and all sufficiency of the great sacrifice which He offered for you. The great and glorious possibilities He by His cross opened up to you. If I have been the humble instrument used by the Holy Spirit, of leading even one of you to love Christ more and seek for grace and strength to serve Him better. If, through these sermons even one shall be drawn by the power of the cross, to a higher and holier life, they will not have been preached in vain. And to God be all the praise.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

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